

Strategic Skills Initiative Root Causes Report Cover Sheet

Economic Growth Region # 6 : Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region

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**Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region 6
Strategic Skills Initiative
Root Causes Report**

Executive Summary

Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region (EIEGR) is comprised of nine counties – Blackford, Delaware, Fayette, Henry, Jay, Randolph, Rush, Union and Wayne bordering Ohio on the east and Central Indiana on the west. The population of the area is 350,000 with 186,000 people working in 302 different industries. The region's common history in the manufacturing boom, which continues to dominate the economy although declining over the past three decades, is also responsible for a culture of the region which has not invested in and does not value education. For generations families in this region have depended on the comfortable lifestyle the manufacturing industry has afforded them. Parents did not encourage their children to pursue higher education because of the abundance of high wage manufacturing jobs that required little or no post-secondary education. With the loss of population and nearly 28,000 jobs in recent years, the region's workforce has been caught unaware of other in-demand occupations and career choices as the means to the middle class lifestyle. Therein lay two of the problems for which we must seek a solution. 1) There is a need to increase the number of high paying jobs to retain talent in the region and increase the per capita income. 2) There is a need to increase the education level and skill level of the incumbent and available workforce to meet the needs of the region's employers.

In the Region's Occupational Skill Shortages Report published on November 4, 2005, the Key Industries were identified as 1) Manufacturing, 2) Health Care Services, 3) Agriculture, and 4) Transportation & Warehousing. Within and across these key industries the critical occupations of focus identified are:

- Health Diagnosing and Treating Occupations
- Health Technologists and Technicians
- Life Scientists
- Business Operations Specialists
- Metal Workers and Plastic Workers
- Truck Drivers – Heavy Tractor Trailers

That report also identified several cross-cutting skill shortages including communications, reading comprehension, computer literacy, mathematics and science, problem solving, leadership, and work ethics.

During Phase II, 110 executive interviews and focus groups with representatives of key industries, education, partner, elected official, students, and workers throughout the region helped verify the Phase I information. In addition, Phase II research was conducted to determine why the occupation and skill gaps exist. The findings were enlightening and will become the blueprint for the Phase III Solutions Report. The summary of the root causes in order of priority are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Root Causes Summary Table.

Root Cause	Occupation	Importance	Overall Rank	Responsibility
Lack of Education	Cross Cutting	High	1	Local
Lack of Career Awareness	Cross Cutting	Moderate	2	Local
Lack of Capacity	Health Care	High	3	Local
Regulatory and Policy – RN Class Instructor Credentialing	Health Care	High	4	State
Regulatory and Policy	Cross Cutting	High	5	
Business-Education Disconnect				Local
Vocational Education Funding Policies				State
UI Benefits Policies				State
Lack of Career Awareness	Truck Driving	High	6	Local
Lack of Career Awareness	Health Care	Moderate-High	7	Local
Lack of Accessibility	Truck Driving	Low	8	Local

The Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region has clearly recognized that its future strength will be based, in part, upon the strength and preparedness of each of its counties and how well each of those counties can work together as a region. Each county must be able to compete, retain, and grow its economy while discovering and implementing ways the region can work together to enhance and complement those local efforts. This report gives the region the focus and direction for the root causes that, if addressed on a region-wide basis will allow for each county and the region as a whole to achieve the goals of growing jobs and growing income. In a nutshell – Thinking locally and acting regionally!

I. Methodology

In Phase II of the Initiative, we utilized the recommended methodology as set forth in the SSI Guidebook. While the main focus of Phase II efforts concentrated on identifying root causes, we also further validated and narrowed the occupational and skill shortages uncovered during Phase I. Feedback on shortages and root causes was elicited through executive interviews, focus groups, and online surveys. Many of the participants in the Phase II data collection efforts attended community forums during Phase I, while others were identified through cooperation among the SSI E-Team, local economic developers, and chambers of commerce.

The team conducted 110 executive interviews. To do this in the time allotted, the region contracted with a third party to assist in the survey design and to complete the face to face interviews. Executive interviews were aimed at gaining feedback from employers, educators, and community partners. Because each of these groups has a different role in the community, three different sets of interview questions were formed to elicit potential root causes – an employer survey, an educator survey, and a community partner survey (see Appendix A, B, and C, respectively). Table 2 represents the number of employers, educators, and community partners interviewed in each county. It is important to note that some of these interviews contained two or more people providing feedback at the same time. For instance, the owner of a company often invited the Human Resources representative to join in for additional depth. For a complete list of organizations participating to date in each county, please see Appendix D. Additional interviews with employers are continuing to be conducted where unsatisfactory penetration was achieved.

	Employers	Educators	Community Partners
Blackford	3	1	1
Delaware	9	4	9
Fayette	5	4	4
Henry	7	2	6
Jay	11	2	7
Randolph	4	1	4
Rush	7	2	2
Union	1	0	3
Wayne	2	3	6

Table 2. Number of Interviewees by County.

Additionally, online surveys were used to identify potential root causes. Due to the time constraints of Phase II, this approach allowed the team to gather additional feedback from

employers, educators, and partners that were unable to be scheduled for an executive interview. Questions posed to online survey participants were similar to topics presented in the executive interviews (see Appendices A, B, and C). A total of 102 online invitations were sent out, including all consortium members not scheduled in a face to face interview, and 13 responses were received. A breakdown of those receiving the online survey is presented in Table 3.

	Invited	Responded
Employers	49	3
Educators	23	5
Partners	30	4

Table 3. Number of Online Surveys Sent and Received.

A. Employer Recruitment and Retention

Data supporting root causes associated with employer recruitment and retention were primarily elicited during executive interviews with employers. Questionnaires were designed to determine what, if any, influence employer recruitment and retention had on the current occupational and skill shortages affecting the region. Overall employers indicated they had very few open positions although expect that to change over the next 3-5 years. Employers did not report an overall shortage of workers in the critical occupations, but, rather, an overall shortage in the following critical skills within the available workforce: work ethic, basic math, communication skills, reading comprehension, problem solving, computer literacy, and teamwork. Other comments gathered during the interviews include the following:

- Employers reported difficulty in recruiting people with a good work ethic and good interpersonal skills. One employer said, “I recently looked at 50 resumes and only brought in seven (7) people to interview for my three positions. The others had very unstable work records.”
- Employers reported having the most difficulty filling openings in the following occupations: truck drivers, pharmacists, nurses in nursing homes.
- The transportation industry is having difficulty recruiting and retaining employees. The competition is fierce for drivers and they job hop a lot.
- Primary recruiting methods reported by employers included: employee referrals, WorkOne, temporary agencies and local newspapers.

B. Education and Training

Information pertaining to the education and training of our region’s workforce was discussed during employer, educator, and community partner interviews. Interview questions were designed to determine what education and training is available to all levels of the workforce, whether the workforce is taking advantage of training, and how well the current education and training is preparing the workforce. Overall responses indicate there is a lack of education and training due to a cultural bias against postsecondary education. Schools report high enrollment in health care courses with the machine tool trades being a close second. Specific comments regarding education and training in the region include:

- “There are about 125 students in each class, so we don’t have the money to offer much outside of Core 40. The superintendent said that we can’t do anything more

than the Core 40, because the State dictates what and how we teach. We only do what the state wants.” A little harsher than some of the responses from the high schools, but most had the same sense of frustration. One of the career centers reported that they recently added a pharmacy tech program.

- “There is room for advanced manufacturing programs but it’s difficult to get the employers together.”
- “Employers are, however, increasingly concerned about “work ethic”...basic stuff: showing up for work on time, dressing appropriately, completing work assignments, follow-up, etc. We have recently introduced the Work Ethics Certificate at the high school. Almost 100% of the employers are signed up to participate and 18-20% of the eligible students.”
- “There is always a need to offer more “soft skills” training...communication, working well on a team, managing conflict, etc. But again, we lack the time and resources and not sure these classes solve the problem. I think the “work ethic certification” is what we need right now.”
- “There is a universal lack of preparation for education beyond High School. 91% of the students entering [postsecondary education] need to take remedial courses. The skill level out of High School is below Indiana averages, and Indiana averages are far below the national averages...”
- “If the Governor would like to address something in a sincere and meaningful way he would help with the enormous cultural issues that are part of the legacy of the auto industry. At the height of automobile production in the U.S. that gave rise to a true phenomena; that is plentiful jobs in heretofore rural, agricultural communities, unprecedented high wages and benefits coupled with low or no demanding skills or educational requirements led a whole generation of workers and their families to believe that working hard in the factories gave them the right to enter the middle class. And then the world changed. This entire generation of workers and their children and now their children’s children still don’t understand what happened to their jobs and the middle class lifestyle that went along with it. Additionally, they have no idea how to cope with the loss in healthy ways or how to make a living in this new economy. Education is the answer, but educators are not necessarily the answer.”

C. Career Awareness

Employers, educators, and community partners all provided us with insight to career awareness issues that may contribute to the occupational and skill shortages in the region. The overriding message is that students and workers are not receiving the awareness, skills, and training necessary to be productive, contributing workers for in-demand occupations. Specific comments regarding this lack of awareness include:

- Technical career centers offer the most programs in the skilled trades arena. The challenge here is recruiting sophomores into the program. Students and parents often view manufacturing in a negative light and do not choose it as a career.
- Parental and family support is perceived as being relatively high in the health care occupations.

D. Wage Rates and Benefits

Data supporting potential wage rates and benefits root causes were discussed primarily during employer interviews. The biggest concern with current wage rates and benefits involves the low skilled, high pay legacy left behind by manufacturers in this region. Employers report that they cannot pay what many workers are accustomed to earning, and often the workers' skill and education level does not justify high wages. Specific information regarding wages and benefits include:

- Benefits packages range from 20-40% of total compensation (the exception is the transportation industry; because of the nature of this industry, companies cannot afford basic benefits like health care insurance, etc.)
- Most employers do not offer a hiring bonus except occasionally in some occupations within health care.
- Some employers lose employees to other companies with better benefits plans even though wages might be comparable or slightly lower than what they are currently making.

To supplement this methodology, we also took advantage of two web-based workshops during Phase II. The first workshop, which we participated in at 2:30 p.m. on November 22nd, provided us with an overview and approach to the root causes report. We participated in the second workshop at 10:00 a.m. on December 22nd. During this workshop, we presented our findings and narrowed down which results were truly root causes.

II. Root Causes

Table 4 summarizes the most significant root causes identified during Phase II as they related to the Occupational and Skill Shortages for the region. Each of these root causes will be discussed in detail in the body of this report. An overall ranking of priority has been assigned to each root cause along with the identification of the responsibility as either “state” and/or “local”. While some of the root causes may have a high ranking of priority, if the responsibility is assigned to the “state” there may be minimal ability of the region to resolve that root cause.

Table 4. Root Causes Summary Table.

Root Cause	Occupation	Importance	Overall Rank	Responsibility
Lack of Education	Cross Cutting	High	1	Local
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Lack of Capacity	Health Care	High	3	Local
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UI Benefits Policies				State
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Lack of Accessibility	Truck Driving	Low	8	Local

A. Occupational Root Causes

1. Health Care

a) Lack of Capacity

The most significant root cause contributing to the shortage of qualified health care workers in the region is a lack of capacity in local health care education programs. This root cause was identified primarily through anecdotal evidence during educator interviews, and also seems to be a nationwide issue (Nursing Facts, 2005; American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2005). Educators at the high school and college level reported programs, especially those leading to registered nursing and licensed practical nursing, consistently being full. Because of the low number of available practicum slots at local hospitals, schools are able to only accept a certain number of students each year and the rest are forced onto waiting lists.

The lack of capacity in health care training is of high importance in addressing the shortage of qualified health care workers in the region. The high interest in the health care occupations is demonstrated through consistently full programs. However, many students are being turned away from these programs due to capacity issues. Before we can expect to see the health care shortage alleviated, we must have slots available to provide training.

The current health care shortage is extremely sensitive to the changes in the capacity issue currently plaguing our health care training programs. Not only does the aging population demand additional qualified health care workers, but current health care workers are part of that aging workforce. It is likely we will continue to lose senior members of this occupation to retirement so it is imperative that the capacity to train more health care workers is expanded.

The quantitative reduction in the health care shortage is proportional to the increase in training capacity minus the graduates who move out of the region. For instance, if X is the number of training slots added to the health care training programs at the Ivy Tech Campuses in the region, the decrease in the predicted shortage will be $X-5\%$, with 5% being the estimated percentage of Ivy Tech graduates who relocate outside of the region. Similarly, the out migration rate for Ball State and Indiana University East graduates is 95% each.

b) Lack of Career Awareness

One of the root causes linked to the shortages in health care occupations is the awareness of these occupations as viable career options, the wages and benefits paid, the working conditions, the required education and training, locations of training, as well as, gender bias. While the need for RNs is fairly well understood, many young adults do not understand the career ladders available to them to achieve these occupations. There remains a preconception among young adults that these careers are not appropriate options for males, and an overall lack of understanding of the demand for and career path to becoming a technician. This root cause reflects the lack of

understanding by the students as well as those who guide the decisions of young adults, typically counselors, teachers, and parents. It also reflects the emphasis of high school counselors on four year college degrees as opposed to vocational, technical and 2 + 2 educational options.

This root cause is of moderate importance as it relates to the Registered Nurse (RN) occupation. While there is a huge need, the capacity and regulatory and policy issues must first be addressed in order to eliminate the bottleneck to training more RNs. This root cause is of high importance when considering the other health careers in demand due to the lack of awareness at all levels of the career pathways and demand for the technical occupations. Skill shortages cannot be addressed without students becoming interested through career awareness and subsequently entering the course of study in order to prepare for the occupation.

This root cause was identified and verified throughout the community forums and executive interviews/focus groups held throughout the nine counties of the region. Even more important was the expressed need to assure the career information is reaching the parents of the students. The region was encouraged by educators to develop information to help parents understand the value of students attending health occupation vocational education programs, particularly as it relates to students earning CNA certification, and dual credits with Ivy Tech Community College while making good career decisions through hands on experience.

With the implementation of an effective career awareness program aimed at students, teachers, parents, counselors and foundations responsible for financial aid to students pursuing post secondary education, the region expects to begin to see more students enroll in these training programs. Efforts to recruit young men into a career area traditionally held by women will result in additional enrollments.

There are currently waiting lists for various health care training classes. This has been achieved through a concerted effort to make counselors, teachers, students and adults aware of the career. We expect over time to achieve similar increases in enrollments and qualified candidates to fill the openings. Because we have not determined specific solutions for this root cause, it is difficult to determine how many people will be made aware of and pursue a career in a health care occupation. Therefore, no quantitative analysis for a reduction in the health care shortage relative to this root cause is presented in this report.

c) Regulatory and Policy

Another root cause to the health care shortage, and specifically the RN shortage, is the lack of qualified instructors. Raising capacity within health care training programs does not guarantee the availability of instructors who meet the accreditation requirements. Masters level nurses who meet the accreditation requirements to teach the classes are in short supply, and are frequently lured to positions outside of academe because typically Indiana's educational system cannot compete with the wages and benefits offered by private sector employment. This root cause was identified through

the Muncie Ivy Tech Community College Health Care Summit and affirmed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities publication entitled “Higher Education’s Role in Solving the National Nursing Shortage”, October 2005.

Addressing this policy issue is of high importance in addressing the health care shortage. This root cause is closely intertwined with the lack of capacity in health care training programs. Solving one will only cause the other to grow in significance and importance. Increasing the health care training program capacity will require more instructors however, if these instructors are not readily available, graduates will not be produced due to a shortage of instructors. This root cause will maintain significance as training program capacity is increased and current health care professionals retire. There are two schools of thought on this root cause; produce/attract more qualified instructors or change the qualifications to be an instructor.

Regardless of the solution to the bottleneck, the supply of health care professionals will not increase until this instructor shortage is addressed. Once solved the occupational gap will begin to decrease or at least prevent a further widening of the shortage. Addressing this root cause may also allow experienced health care professionals who have been unable to instruct in the past to share their experiences with students. Additionally, students would likely benefit from smaller class sizes more instructors may afford. We do not anticipate addressing this root cause on a region level but rather on a state and national level. As cited in the article “Higher Education’s Role in Solving the National Nursing Shortage,” this phenomenon is not unique to Eastern Indiana.

Because the potential solutions for this root cause are out of our authority, it is difficult to determine how many more health care workers may be produced if more instructors were available. Therefore, no quantitative analysis for a reduction in the health care worker shortage relative to this root cause is presented in this report.

2. Truck Drivers, Heavy

a) Lack of Career Awareness

The primary root cause of the current truck driver shortage in Eastern Indiana is a lack of career awareness. Most people are not aware of heavy and long haul trucking as an in-demand and above-average paying occupation. It is especially difficult to attract graduating students to this occupation since they do not meet the national age requirements to be a truck driver; most young people have chosen another occupation by the time they reach the age of 21, and have long forgotten the option of becoming a heavy truck driver (Industry News, 2005). Older workers may be hesitant to leave the comfort of their current job to pursue truck driving as they perceive it will not pay well and will take them away from their family for long periods of time. This root cause was affirmed throughout the executive interviews and focus groups conducted. With the exception of the businesses that directly employ heavy truck drivers and the partners responsible for brokering the training and subsequent job placement of individuals, there was no acknowledgement that the occupational shortage existed.

The lack of career awareness is of high importance in addressing the shortage of truck drivers in Eastern Indiana. In order to attract more people to this line of work, the population must be made aware of the opportunities afforded by a career in heavy truck driving. The shortage will continue as long as people are oblivious to the possibilities.

Long reaching benefits of raising awareness to the opportunities available in truck driving not only include depleting the nationwide shortage but also growing one of our key industries in Eastern Indiana. Due to our centralized geographical location and recent changes to our intermodal legislation (SEA 571), trucking and logistics companies will be more likely to locate their businesses here. By increasing the awareness of our citizens to this career opportunity, we can make our workforce more appealing to these companies by providing trained drivers. In turn, we will likely see a positive growth in the economy as members of our workforce obtain these higher wage positions.

Because we have not determined solutions for this root cause, it is difficult to determine how many people will be made aware of and pursue a career in truck driving. Therefore, no quantitative analysis for a reduction in the truck driving shortage relative to this root cause is presented in this report.

b) Lack of Accessibility

The lack of accessibility to training programs in the area is a secondary root cause to the shortage of heavy and long haul truck drivers in the region. This root cause was identified through interviews with educators which revealed that there are currently no institutions offering heavy and long haul truck driving training programs in the region. People interested in pursuing this career must travel to Indianapolis to receive necessary training.

The issue of accessibility to training is of low importance to addressing the shortage of heavy truck drivers in Eastern Indiana. As awareness is raised about the opportunities available in truck driving, it is likely more people will seek the formal training necessary to enter the occupation at which time the importance of this issue may increase. These prospective employees may be discouraged by the lack of accessibility to training considering the financial implications of traveling to and from Indianapolis every day.

Creating more accessible options for truck driver training is of great sensitivity to alleviating this occupational shortage in Eastern Indiana. The legacy of untrained workers from the manufacturing industry is especially concentrated in the region. Many of these workers are seeking good paying jobs without a 2- or 4-year degree, and heavy truck driving is one option that could appeal to them if training was more readily available. Additionally, increased accessibility to training may raise occupational awareness, which has also been identified as a causal factor in this shortage.

A closer examination of this root cause reveals a potential reduction in the truck driver shortage in the region. Ivy Tech – Muncie reports they will revive their 5-week truck

driving program in the spring of 2006. Initially they plan to accept twelve students and will allow the future size of the program to be demand-driven with the only limitation being equipment. It is likely the shortage will be reduced by the number of people graduating from this program each year minus the graduates who move to another area. There is currently no estimation on how many graduates may relocate after receiving their Commercial Drivers License (CDL).

B. Cross-Cutting Root Causes – All Occupations

1. Lack of Education - Job Specific Skills and Basic Skills

The primary root cause affecting all occupations and skills in Eastern Indiana is a lack of education in the workforce, especially in the areas of job specific skills and basic skills. Job specific skills refer to those skills necessary to gain entry into and function effectively in a career occupation such as nursing, business operations, or life sciences. These skills are usually acquired through postsecondary education but for existing employees may be delivered outside of the traditional educational system via a regional skills alliance within or across industries. Conversely, basic skills are those learned at the grade school and secondary school level including math, science, reading comprehension, communication, and computer literacy. These competencies are required in all occupations. More often than not, applicants do not possess the basic skills necessary to be successful in the workforce, let alone the job specific skills employers are looking for.

The lack of education is of high importance to addressing the shortage of skilled workers in the Eastern Indiana area. Without education, the region cannot expect to build a solid, competitive workforce. The importance and workplace applicability of basic skills must be emphasized to students early. These basic skills will then serve as a stepping stone for students seeking job specific skills. This root cause has been identified and verified by both the East Central and Southeastern Indiana Workforce Investment Boards independently through employer studies conducted within recent years. Energize ECI (East Central Indiana), working in conjunction with the East Central Indiana Workforce Investment Board (ECIWIB) Incumbent Worker Council, confirmed this finding with manufacturing representatives in the East Central Skills Alliance Report released November 10, 2005. These findings were verified through the executive interviews with business representatives.

The impact of increasing the education and skills of the workforce in the region will be immeasurable. Additional education will allow many people to acquire higher paying positions thus raising their quality of life. As the education and skill levels of the workforce are improved, companies may relocate more high paying jobs to the area to stimulate economic growth. Lastly, and perhaps most important, as people become educated they can demonstrate the importance of education to future generations, potentially eliminating the no-need-for-education attitude created in this region during the height of the automobile manufacturing industry.

Because we have not determined solutions for this root cause, it is difficult to determine how many people will consider and pursue additional education. Therefore, no

quantitative analysis for a reduction in the skills shortage relative to this root cause is presented in this report.

2. Lack of Career Awareness

Lack of career awareness is a secondary root cause cutting across all occupations and skills in the region. For generations families in this region have depended on the comfortable lifestyle the manufacturing industry has afforded them. Parents did not encourage their children to pursue higher education because of the abundance of high wage manufacturing jobs that required little or no post-secondary education. With the downsizing of the manufacturing industry in recent years, the region's workforce has been caught unaware of other in-demand occupations and career choices. The same lack of awareness plagues the secondary education system. Teachers, counselors, and administrators are isolated from the business community. As a result they have not kept current on the career opportunities that exist in today's businesses.

This root cause was identified through executive interviews and focus groups in business and education sectors alike. Business representatives reported that high schools are not preparing students for jobs in their companies. One manufacturing company reported not even being asked to participate in a career fair due to the school's perception that the job opportunities were low skill and required no training. Secondary education personnel lack awareness of career opportunities that exist in industries in the region, and generally do not perceive their job to prepare students with the workforce skills. Without an understanding of existing businesses, their career opportunities and skill requirements, educators cannot prepare or counsel students on career options and education/training requirements other than four year degrees.

Raising career awareness in the region is of moderate importance to addressing the occupational and skill shortages in Eastern Indiana. This root cause is somewhat dependant on improving the education of people in the region. Although we can make them aware of in-demand and high wage occupations, they must also possess the knowledge and skills afforded by basic education to gain entrance into postsecondary schools. In order to achieve a systemic change, solutions will need to encompass educational personnel.

Immeasurable benefits of addressing the lack of career awareness in this region include a more prepared and versatile workforce. Increasing the awareness of available occupations, and what skills and education are required to be successful in these occupations, can allow students to better prepare themselves for higher paying careers. Our workforce will become more attractive to companies looking to build or expand in the region and bring high paying, high skilled occupations with them.

Because we have not determined solutions for this root cause, it is difficult to determine how many people will consider and pursue a higher paying, higher skilled occupation. Therefore, no quantitative analysis for a reduction in the occupation and skill shortages relative to this root cause is presented in this report.

3. Regulatory and Policy

The region's investigation of the causal factors contributing to the occupational skill shortages pointed out some apparent barriers within the regulatory and policy realm. Those barriers include Business – Education Disconnect, Indiana Secondary School Reimbursements, and Unemployment Insurance Benefits Policies. Following is a description of each root cause and its relative importance in addressing skill shortages.

There is an apparent disconnect between education and businesses with regard to the worker skill sets required. All industries, including the manufacturing industry, continue to convey their need for employees who have good basic math, reading, written communication, problem solving, computer literacy and teamwork skills. When interviewing secondary educators, counselors and administrators, it was apparent that High schools do not perceive their role as preparing workers with the skills required by employers, rather to prepare their students to pass the I-Step tests for graduation and SAT and/or ACT exams for college entrance.

Another obstacle preventing the preparation of students with the skills required to meet employer needs is the need to align vocational funding with Economic Growth Region priorities. Currently this region understands that the priorities for Indiana Secondary School vocational program reimbursements are established by the State based upon Labor Market Information (LMI) from the Department of Workforce Development. This LMI source does not take into account the priorities established by the Economic Growth Regions and certainly does not account for emerging occupations. Waivers are reportedly available for optional application by each educational provider. Currently waivers are granted based upon imminent, documented events, i.e. a plant location/expansion.

The net funding (reimbursement less the cost) school corporations receive for students attending vocational programs at a location outside of their school, i.e. an area vocational school, is another issue. Some of the vocational programs in priority areas identified by the Economic Growth Region are not filled and others need to have the capacity increased to meet the needs as prioritized by the region. In considering the option of more students attending vocational education for either skill development or real world career awareness, the reality, or at least perception, of high schools is that there is a financial disincentive to the high schools when students attend vocational education programs. In addition, while reportedly state reimbursements are available, the cost of transportation is becoming a larger issue each year of rising fuel costs. This issue is more prevalent in rural areas where the economies of scale do not assist in offsetting the costs. This perception/reality manifests itself in some schools, at best, under promoting the vocational education opportunities as viable options to students and their parents and, in some cases, limits placed by corporations on the number of students that can attend vocational programs.

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Benefits policies are another root cause contributing to the failure of our workers to possess the basic skills required by employers. Employers pay a UI tax, which is then collected and paid out by the State of Indiana in the form of UI Benefits to eligible workers when they are not working. Unemployed workers, whether cyclically or structurally unemployed, have no requirement to upgrade their skills to meet

the changing technology needs of their current employer or in learning new skills in preparation for their next employer as a condition of receiving UI Benefits. This system of compensating individuals during periods of unemployment was created in a different time and economic era when worker skill requirements remained fairly constant and technology changes did not rapidly outdate the relevant worker skills. Indiana cannot afford state policies and regulations that perpetuate a system of providing benefits to workers while their skills fail to meet the minimum standards of basic skills required by employers.

This root cause is a high level of importance. Until there is a clear line of sight between the planning and priorities established by the Economic Growth Regions, the funding made available and the incentives or disincentives for school corporations to prepare students for those priorities, and the alignment of UI Benefits policies with worker skill upgrades where appropriate, the opportunity to make progress in closing the gaps will be lost. In order to grow the economy of the region it is important to align the available resources with the priorities at all levels.

This root cause was identified during the course of the executive interviews and focus groups with business and industry in the target occupations, as well as, executive interviews and focus groups with educators and partners. During business executive interviews, primarily with the manufacturing industry, we repeatedly heard from employers that a real disconnect exists between education and industry worker skill needs. Educators reported that the level of reimbursement for vocational programs vary and is established by the Department of Education based upon the recommendation of the State Commission. State reimbursement levels should reflect the priorities established by regions across the state so educational institutions are provided incentives to develop vocational programs that match the key industries and occupational shortages of each region. Partners reported frustrations with social policies that are disincentives to skill upgrades and work ethic.

When interviewing secondary educators, counselors and administrators, it was apparent that high schools do not perceive their role as preparing workers with the skills required by employers, rather to prepare their students to pass the I-Step tests for graduation and SAT tests for college entrance. Indiana high schools are teaching to tests and academic preparedness as opposed to the skills required in the workforce, yet according to *The 70 Percent Solution: Five Principles for Helping Young People Make Better Choices During and After High School*, 70% of those graduating high school will not complete a four year degree. Even more concerning is that the 70% statistic does not take into account those who do not complete their high school education, making the disconnect even higher. Those students who make up that 70+ percent typically are the students seeking jobs who do not possess the ability to apply the academic skills or do not possess the vocational skills to meet employer needs.

With incentives, or at least the elimination of disincentives, for directing resources to the 70+% who will not achieve a four year degree, and funneling more students into vocational programs in priority areas resulting in applied learning, the likelihood of meeting employer expectations for a higher percentage of the workforce is unlikely.

III. Regional Coalition and Industry Partner Engagement

All E-Team, consortia, and forum attendees were offered a chance to participate in Phase II through either a face to face interview or an online survey. All nine counties in Eastern Indiana were represented during these interviews through employer, educator, and/or partner involvement. Findings among counties were very similar, with the occasional unique or different scenario manifesting in only one or two counties. A breakdown of interviewees is presented in Table 5. Specific names of those interviewed have been omitted to ensure anonymity.

Table 5. Organizations Interviewed in EGR 6.

County	Interview	Organization	County	Interview	Organization
Blackford	Employer	Blackford County Hospital	Jay	Education	Jay County High School
Blackford	Employer	3M	Jay	Education	Jay County High School
Blackford	Employer	Gripco Fasteners	Jay	Employer	Qualtech Tool
Blackford	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Jay	Employer	X-Plex
Blackford	Education	Blackford High School	Jay	Employer	Jay County Hospital
Delaware	Education	Ivy Tech State College	Jay	Employer	Americare Communities
Delaware	Education	BSU*	Jay	Employer	FCC
Delaware	Education	Muncie Area Career Center, Sups., Guidance, Principals	Jay	Employer	Fortco Plastics
Delaware	Education	Ivy Tech State College	Jay	Employer	Pennville Custom Cabinets
Delaware	Employer	Delaware Machine*	Jay	Employer	Tyson
Delaware	Employer	Jarden Home Brands*	Jay	Employer	Americare Heritage Commons
Delaware	Employer	Magna	Jay	Employer	Createc
Delaware	Employer	Midwest Metals	Jay	Employer	Fullenkamp Machine
Delaware	Employer	Muncie Power Products	Jay	Partner	Commissioners & Mayor
Delaware	Employer	Maxon Corp.	Jay	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group
Delaware	Employer	Ontario Corp.	Jay	Partner	EDC & COC*
Delaware	Employer	Health Care Focus Group*	Jay	Partner	Jay Community Center
Delaware	Employer	Attlin Construction	Jay	Partner	State Legislator
Delaware	Partner	Ball Brothers Foundation	Jay	Partner	DFC
Delaware	Partner	OSO consortium	Jay	Partner	Portland Foundation
Delaware	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group*	Randolph	Education	Winchester High School, Educators
Delaware	Partner	Community Development	Randolph	Employer	Astral Industries
Delaware	Partner	WIB Member	Randolph	Employer	St. Vincent Randolph Hospital
Delaware	Partner	Community Foundation	Randolph	Employer	Randolph County Bank
Delaware	Partner	DFC	Randolph	Employer	Workhorse Custom Chassis
Delaware	Partner	State Legislator	Randolph	Partner	Commissioners and Mayor*
Delaware	Partner	EDC & COC*	Randolph	Partner	Labor Representative
Fayette	Education	Whitewater Technical Center*	Randolph	Partner	Randolph Community Foundation
Fayette	Education	Connersville High School, Principal	Randolph	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group

County	Interview	Organization	County	Interview	Organization
Fayette	Education	Connersville High School	Rush	Education	Rush County Schools
Fayette	Education	Whitewater Technical Center*	Rush	Education	Rushville High School, Guidance Dept.
Fayette	Employer	Eldridge & Associates	Rush	Employer	Farm Credit Services
Fayette	Employer	Ready Machine	Rush	Employer	Fraley & Schilling Trucking
Fayette	Employer	Roots Blower	Rush	Employer	PKG Trucking
Fayette	Employer	Visteon	Rush	Employer	Copeland
Fayette	Employer	Stant	Rush	Employer	Harcourt Industries
Fayette	Partner	DFC	Rush	Employer	Miller's Merry Manor
Fayette	Partner	EDC & COC*	Rush	Employer	Rush Memorial Hospital
Fayette	Partner	Elected Official	Rush	Partner	Elected Officials
Fayette	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Rush	Partner	EDC & COC*
Henry	Education	Danielson Center for Learning	Rush	Partner	State Legislator
Henry	Education	New Castle Chrysler High School*	Union	Employer	NSK
Henry	Employer	Henry County Memorial Hospital	Union	Partner	Elected Officials
Henry	Employer	American Keeper	Union	Partner	DFC
Henry	Employer	Cardinal Pharmacy	Union	Partner	Union County Foundation
Henry	Employer	Carquest	Wayne	Education	Ivy Tech State College*
Henry	Employer	Clouse Concrete	Wayne	Education	Richmond High School
Henry	Employer	Draper Shade	Wayne	Education	Life Sciences Coordinator
Henry	Employer	Switzer Tank Lines	Wayne	Employer	Burns Construction
Henry	Partner	City of New Castle	Wayne	Employer	Taconic Farms
Henry	Partner	DFC	Wayne	Partner	SBDC*
Henry	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Wayne	Partner	Elected Officials
Henry	Partner	EDC & COC*	Wayne	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group
Henry	Partner	Elected Official	Wayne	Partner	Economic Development*
Henry	Partner	Henry County Community Foundation	Wayne	Partner	Wayne County Foundation

* – Denotes SSI Consortium Member

It is clear the companies, educators, and partners of Eastern Indiana solidly support this Initiative through their involvement and letters of support. Twenty-three (23) groups within the region provided letters supporting our findings and encouraging a continued effort in this Initiative. Additionally, eight (8) employers committed to providing letters of support but were unable to do so by the deadline for this report. A role and country breakdown of received letters of support is presented in Table 6. The complete letters are presented in Appendix E.

Table 6. Organizations Providing Letters of Support.

Organization	Role	County	Signatory
Ball State University	Education	Delaware	Delaina Boyd*
Muncie-Delaware County Economic Development Alliance	Partner	Delaware	Terry Murphy*, Elizabeth Vandelene
Muncie Area Career Center	Education	Delaware	Jo Ann McCowan*
Mid-West Metal Products	Employer	Delaware	Kevin Smith

Organization	Role	County	Signatory
Ivy Tech - Muncie	Education	Delaware	Gail Chestefield
East Central Opportunities, Inc.	Partner	Delaware	Patrick Miller
Ball Brothers Foundation	Partner	Delaware	Douglas A. Bakken
Cardinal Health System, Inc.	Employer	Delaware	Terry L. Allen*
Indiana Kentucky Council of Regional Carpenters	Partner	Delaware	Joe Evans ^c
Jarden Home Brands	Employer	Delaware	Howard Scheetz*
Jay County Hospital	Employer	Delaware	Joe Johnston
Whitewater Technical Career Center	Education	Fayette	Milt Eley*
Henry County Commissioners	Partner	Henry	Philip Estridge *
Representative Bill Davis	Partner	Henry	Bill Davis
Jay County Development Corp.	Partner	Jay	Bob Quadrozzi*
Tyson	Employer	Jay	Lisa Price
City of Rushville	Partner	Rush	Mayor Bob Bridges *
Rush County Schools	Education	Rush	Dennis Chambers ^c
Rush County Schools	Education	Rush	Dr. Edwin Lyskowinski
Wayne County Commissioners	Partner	Wayne	Thomas A. Dickman
Ivy Tech - Richmond	Education	Wayne	Kim Thurlow
Burns Corporation	Employer	Wayne	Dennis Burns ^c
City of Richmond	Partner	Wayne	Mayor Sally Hutton

^c – Denotes SSI E-Team Member

* – Denotes SSI Consortium Member

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Appendices

Appendix A – Employer Interview Questions

Company/Organization Employment Information

1. What business are you in? (i.e. What does your company/organization do)?
2. How many employees do you have working in the Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region No. 6? How many Full Time employees do you have? How many Part Time employees do you have?
3. What major changes/shifts have occurred within your firms/industries during the past 3-5 years? What strategic challenges and concerns do these changes pose for your company and your workforce now? Within the next 3-5 years?
4. What are the effects of technology on your company, your current workforce and current applicants and hiring needs? How will that continue to change?
5. What additional changes do you anticipate will happen in the next 3-5 years that will have an impact on your company and your industry?

Targeted Occupations

1. Which of the occupations below do you have in your company? (Refer interviewee to appropriate list of critical occupations.) How many?

Of these occupations, where are you experiencing a shortage of qualified workers within your current workforce? Within your applicant pool? How many in each?

How many current open positions do you have in each of these occupations?

Do you expect the open positions to increase or decrease over the next 24 months? Why?

The next 7-10 years?

2. What are the qualifications (company specific/job description information) for each of these positions? Please indicate the years of experience, specific skills and specific education or certification.
3. What is the wage/salary range for these positions?
4. Please list the benefits for these positions. What percentage of total compensation do the benefits represent?

Recruitment

1. Why do you think you are having difficulty hiring for the occupations you have identified, and what strategies are your firm/industries using to overcome hiring challenges?

List your primary recruiting methods. Of those which are the most effective?

Do you provide any hiring bonuses or other incentives?

During the interviewing/hiring process who is your main competition for hiring talent from the current available pool of candidates?

From which industry or company are your current employees most often recruited and hired?

Critical Skills

1. Within the occupations you've identified, what are the most critical skills you look for in new hires or in your incumbent workforce?
2. What critical skills are most lacking in the current workforce? Why do you think this is the case?
3. What critical skills are most lacking in new hires or applicants? Why?
4. What skills are least critical?
5. What specific content areas (i.e. management training, diversity, technology skills, etc.) if focused on and given sustained attention and effort could make a positive contribution to the economic health of your firm, and industry as a whole?

Retention

1. What are the top three reasons employees give for leaving your company?
2. What specifically are you doing as a company to build employee loyalty and retention?
3. Why do employees stay?
4. Do you have a formal employee appraisal system in place? If so, please describe. When was it last updated?
5. Do you have a formal employee development program in place? If so, please describe. When was it last updated?
6. Do you provide financial support to employees for continued education and/or skills development? Could you describe it? Or do you have a description of it I might take with me?
7. Are there any positions within your company that have especially high turnover or transfer rates? Which are the names and general descriptions of these positions? What is the reason for the high turnover/transfer rate?
8. To help us gather very specific accurate data, we have a brief survey instrument designed for employees to answer. Here is a copy of the interview instrument itself. Would you be willing to let me conduct a small focus group discussion with 3-5 of your employees? Details, if necessary:

In-house Training and Local Education Opportunities

1. What type or types of employee training programs do you currently provide, if any?

2. What is your opinion or assessment of local education/training opportunities available to employees of your organization?
3. Do local postsecondary education program offerings meet your company's needs?
4. Have you tried working with a postsecondary education institution to obtain training, and if so, how did it go? If you have not, why not?
5. Have you heard of a company not relocating to the region in whole or in part because of a lack of a skilled workforce?
6. Has your company considered relocation to a different region in whole or in part because of a lack of a skilled workforce?

Appendix B – Educator Interview Questions

Targeted Occupations

1. Which of the occupations below do you currently have a program that would prepare someone to enter the occupation? (Refer interviewee to appropriate list of critical occupations.)
2. Of those you don't have a program for, why not? Are there plans to add a program?
3. Are there other programs in demand from employers that you aren't currently offering? Please name them and indicate what plans are in place for creating the programs.
4. What institutional barriers exist that prevent you from providing the classes/programs that the community needs?

Barriers to Entry

1. What percentage of total applicants is admitted to your school? What is the most common reason applicants are turned down?
2. Outside of standard financial aid, what other financial assistance do you make your applicants aware of or that you provide?
3. How are you currently accommodating the “non-traditional student”, i.e. students that might work full-time or part-time and can't be on campus matriculating for 2 years or 4 years solid?
4. Which programs are consistently full and/or consistently have a waiting list? What are you doing to address this?
5. What is your yearly attrition rate? What is your yearly graduation rate? What are the most common reasons students drop out?
6. To which programs do you have the most difficulty attracting students? Why?
7. How much and in what way do the local cultural view of education/training/careers affect your offerings and approach?

Out migration

1. What percentage of your graduates move out of the region following graduation? Why?
2. What could be done to keep more graduates here?

Overall

1. If improved, what areas would likely increase enrollment and completion?

Appendix C – Partner Interview Questions

1. What major changes/shifts have occurred within the area you serve that affect local business/industry and the workforce? Within the next 3-5 years?
2. Listed below and organized by targeted industry sector are the list of critical occupations and skills that we have identified are in short supply. (Refer interviewee to appropriate list of critical occupations.)

Do you feel we have hit on the key ones?

If not, what is missing?

How many Full Time employees do you have?

How many Part Time employees do you have?

3. Now that we have the full list, why do you think there are shortages in the occupations and skills?

What ideas do you have for solving this problem?

4. Do you feel that employers and businesses are satisfied with the quality of applicants they have available for openings?

If not, what issues, skills shortages are they facing that they would like to see addressed?

Why are they facing these issues and what are your suggestions for solutions?

5. What do you personally view as the most critical needs to be addressed in preparing the area's workforce for the next 5-10 years?
6. What role do you feel that your agency/government is best prepared to play in addressing these critical issues/needs?

What else might you do and what could other agencies/government do that they aren't currently?

7. Putting funding and resource issues aside, what is your "wish list" for workforce development in your county/region?
8. Have you heard of a company not locating to or expanding within the region in whole or in part because of a lack of a skilled workforce?
9. Have any of your local companies considered relocation to a different region in whole or in part because of a lack of a skilled workforce? Or for other reasons?

Appendix D – Interview List

County	Interview	Organization	County	Interview	Organization
Blackford	Employer	Blackford County Hospital	Jay	Education	Jay County High School
Blackford	Employer	3M	Jay	Education	Jay County High School
Blackford	Employer	Gripco Fasteners	Jay	Employer	Qualtech Tool
Blackford	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Jay	Employer	X-Plex
Blackford	Education	Blackford High School	Jay	Employer	Jay County Hospital
Delaware	Education	Ivy Tech State College	Jay	Employer	Americare Communities
Delaware	Education	BSU*	Jay	Employer	FCC
Delaware	Education	Muncie Area Career Center, Sups., Guidance, Principals	Jay	Employer	Fortco Plastics
Delaware	Education	Ivy Tech State College	Jay	Employer	Pennville Custom Cabinets
Delaware	Employer	Delaware Machine*	Jay	Employer	Tyson
Delaware	Employer	Jarden Home Brands*	Jay	Employer	Americare Heritage Commons
Delaware	Employer	Magna	Jay	Employer	Createc
Delaware	Employer	Midwest Metals	Jay	Employer	Fullenkamp Machine
Delaware	Employer	Muncie Power Products	Jay	Partner	Commissioners & Mayor
Delaware	Employer	Maxon Corp.	Jay	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group
Delaware	Employer	Ontario Corp.	Jay	Partner	EDC & COC*
Delaware	Employer	Health Care Focus Group*	Jay	Partner	Jay Community Center
Delaware	Employer	Attlin Construction	Jay	Partner	State Legislator
Delaware	Partner	Ball Brothers Foundation	Jay	Partner	DFC
Delaware	Partner	OSO consortium	Jay	Partner	Portland Foundation
Delaware	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group*	Randolph	Education	Winchester High School, Educators
Delaware	Partner	Community Development	Randolph	Employer	Astral Industries
Delaware	Partner	WIB Member	Randolph	Employer	St. Vincent Randolph Hospital
Delaware	Partner	Community Foundation	Randolph	Employer	Randolph County Bank
Delaware	Partner	DFC	Randolph	Employer	Workhorse Custom Chassis
Delaware	Partner	State Legislator	Randolph	Partner	Commissioners and Mayor*
Delaware	Partner	EDC & COC*	Randolph	Partner	Labor Representative
Fayette	Education	Whitewater Technical Center*	Randolph	Partner	Randolph Community Foundation
Fayette	Education	Connersville High School, Principal	Randolph	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group
Fayette	Education	Connersville High School	Rush	Education	Rush County Schools
Fayette	Education	Whitewater Technical Center*	Rush	Education	Rushville High School, Guidance Dept.
Fayette	Employer	Eldridge & Associates	Rush	Employer	Farm Credit Services
Fayette	Employer	Ready Machine	Rush	Employer	Fraley & Schilling Trucking
Fayette	Employer	Roots Blower	Rush	Employer	PKG Trucking
Fayette	Employer	Visteon	Rush	Employer	Copeland
Fayette	Employer	Stant	Rush	Employer	Harcourt Industries
Fayette	Partner	DFC	Rush	Employer	Miller's Merry Manor
Fayette	Partner	EDC & COC*	Rush	Employer	Rush Memorial Hospital
Fayette	Partner	Elected Official	Rush	Partner	Elected Officials
Fayette	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Rush	Partner	EDC & COC*
Henry	Education	Danielson Center for Learning	Rush	Partner	State Legislator
Henry	Education	New Castle Chrysler High School*	Union	Employer	NSK
Henry	Employer	Henry County Memorial Hospital	Union	Partner	Elected Officials
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Henry	Employer	Cardinal Pharmacy	Union	Partner	Union County Foundation
Henry	Employer	Carquest	Wayne	Education	Ivy Tech State College*
Henry	Employer	Clouse Concrete	Wayne	Education	Richmond High School
Henry	Employer	Draper Shade	Wayne	Education	Life Sciences Coordinator
Henry	Employer	Switzer Tank Lines	Wayne	Employer	Burns Construction
Henry	Partner	City of New Castle	Wayne	Employer	Taconic Farms
Henry	Partner	DFC	Wayne	Partner	SBDC*
Henry	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group	Wayne	Partner	Elected Officials
Henry	Partner	EDC & COC*	Wayne	Partner	WorkOne Focus Group
Henry	Partner	Elected Official	Wayne	Partner	Economic Development*
Henry	Partner	Henry County Community Foundation	Wayne	Partner	Wayne County Foundation

* – Denotes SSI Consortium Member

Appendix E – Letters of Support

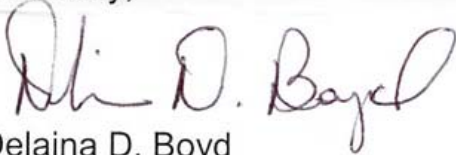
December 22, 2005

RE: Letter of Support

As Director of the Center for Organizational Resources (COR) at Ball State University, I participated in the Strategic Skills Initiative (SSI) through the Delaware County Forum and a face-to-face interview. COR manages and coordinates employee training programs, consulting projects, workforce development activities, research projects, and seminars for business, industry, healthcare institutions, professional associations, and the general public. As a result, I have had the opportunity to work with a number of organizations in the region. The causes most often cited for current workforce problems are: poor work ethic/workplace readiness; inadequate management and supervisory skills; and lack of support for continuing education and training.

I pledge my continued support of the SSI process and look forward to providing assistance with the implementation of solutions.

Sincerely,



Delaina D. Boyd
Director



**HENRY COUNTY
COMMISSIONERS**
HENRY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
101 SOUTH MAIN STREET
NEW CASTLE, INDIANA 47362
PHONE 765-529-4705 • FAX (765) 521-7037

Donald L. Shaw

President

dshaw@henryco.net

Larry D. Hale

Vice President

lhale@henryco.net

Philip J. Estridge

pestridge@henryco.net

December 23, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Strategic Skills Initiative for the East Central Indiana Workforce Development Region. As the Chief Elected Official of this Region, I am well aware of the dedication and hard work that many people have put forth in preparing this Initiative, but more importantly, the work and dedication of the E. C. Workforce Team in the effort to identify, train, educate, and do whatever is necessary, every day, to help Hoosiers enter into and stay in the job market. We need to recruit more employers and increase personal income for families in our Region as we were hard hit by the loss of many jobs over the last year or two. We have many who are in need of re-training and job skills improvement.

You may be aware that representatives from business, education, labor, economic and workforce development, as well as local Elected Officials, were instrumental in developing this plan. We believe that it is an excellent plan for the prevention of job loss, retaining and improving our regional talent, and attracting jobs with wages that are competitive. High paying jobs are a priority. Our goal is also to identify and anticipate occupational shortages and skills that will be addressed and will result, we believe, in establishing long-lasting jobs for our citizens.

It is with firm conviction when I say that dollars are spent wisely by our East Central Workforce Development that greatly benefits our clients as well as our Region and ultimately our whole state. I am proud of the work they do and I heartily endorse the plan they have presented because the same effort will be put forth in implementing and following through as was spent in preparing.

Yours truly,

Phil.Estridge

Henry County Commissioner



**MUNCIE-DELAWARE COUNTY, INDIANA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE**
CONNECTING FORCES

December 29, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

As Vice President of Economic Development and Vice President of Technology Advancement, we have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. The Muncie-Delaware County, Indiana Economic Development Alliance feels this Initiative is especially important to us due to the slow growth of economic development in our region.

401 South High Street
Muncie, Indiana 47305
Phone: 765-288-6601
Toll Free: 800-338-1373
Fax: 765-751-9151
Web: www.muncie.com

Our initial involvement in this effort was due to a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. During the interview, we expressed our opinion that the causes for these shortages include a communication gap between educators and employers, and a negative view of the manufacturing industry. It is the intention of the Economic Development Alliance to provide continued support to this initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Regards,

Terry Murphy, CECD
Vice President,
Economic Development

Elizabeth Vandelene
Vice President,
Technology Advancement

EV/so



City of Rushville

133 West First Street

Rushville, Indiana 46173

Mayor
Robert M. Bridges
(765) 932-3735

Fax (765) 932-4355

Clerk-Treasurer
Ann Copley
(765) 932-2672

December 20, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

As Mayor for the City of Rushville, I have been involved in the Strategic Skills initiative in Eastern Indiana.

The City of Rushville faces several obstacles in the area of workforce development. First, Rushville has a large need of manufacturing based employees for our workforce. Our employers consistently criticize the lack of soft skills needed to be productive in the work environment. Verbal skills, along with the lack of attendance and communication skills seem to be the highest on the list of negatives given as barriers between supervisors and the production worker. We feel that training in these skills could strengthen the workplace environment, enhancing the worker's productivity and create a more harmonious balance for both workers.

The second obstacle the city faces is the attraction of upper level management to reside within Rush County. We have identified at least two reasons for this. Rush County is lacking in amenities, such as restaurants, movie theatres and shopping, for an executive and his family to reside in the community. Coupled with the small selection of high end housing creates a definite negative in our ability to attract executives. On other occasions, if we can attract the primary wage earner, their spouse is also a professional and the opportunity for a job in the area for a person with their skills is difficult to find.

We have recently opened a WorkOne Express at our local hospital. This is the first of its kind in the State of Indiana. We have also opened a training center in Rushville in cooperation with College Cooperative Southeast. We were able to accomplish this, again, by forming partnerships with Rush/Shelby Energy, Rush Memorial Hospital and Rush County Schools.

The third root cause is that our school system is mandated by the Department of Education to enroll students in programs that may not fit the local needs. I think the school system should expand instruction, and granted flexibility, through career and vocational centers such as WTCC in Connersville, and not be restricted by state mandated curriculum.

The City of Rushville will provide continued support to the Strategic Skills Initiative to improve the southeast corridor of the state through enhanced training and workforce development opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Robert M. Bridges". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Robert M. Bridges, Mayor
City of Rushville



WAYNE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

John O. Catey
first district

Thomas A. Dickman
second district

Mary C. Heyob
third district

December 22, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to support the Eastern Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative. As the President of the Wayne County Board of Commissioners, we work closely with our Economic Development Corporation. In doing so, we continually see the need of matching educational requirements with job opportunities.

It is imperative that our county provides properly educated, well-trained employees from our community. By doing this, we are better prepared to attract new businesses to our community who can provide solid employment and income to our residents. Therefore, it is our intention to support this Initiative by providing feedback and participating.

We look forward to continuing our relationship and support in the Eastern Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative.

Sincerely,

WAYNE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Thomas A. Dickman
President

TAD/bf

Wayne County
Administration
Building

401 East Main Street
Richmond, IN 47374
(765) 973-9237
Fax (765) 973-9321

boc@wayneco.us



IVY TECH
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

December 22, 2005

Stephanie Kreseen
Project Lead
Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region – SSI Consortium
P.O. Box 1081
Muncie, Indiana 47308-1081

Dear Stephanie:

As the Executive Director of Workforce and Economic Development for Ivy Tech Community College in Richmond, I have been involved in the Strategic Skills Initiative taking place in Eastern Indiana. In my role at Ivy Tech I am charged with drawing together resources to meet the just-in-time needs of regional employers by creating, directing, or linking key components to provide high quality, cost effective local training. Our geographic region includes Wayne, Rush, Fayette, Union and Franklin counties. During the SSI forums, I was able to attend meetings in Wayne, Rush and Fayette counties. I also participated in a site interview with an SSI team member, David Shaw.

In both my experience and in my observation of the sessions I attended, it appeared certain commonalities surfaced when examining root causes for skills shortages within the region. Employers struggle with barriers to capturing or creating skilled workers that are often rooted in a need for enhanced basic skills, and the development of a sound work ethic. This, in my opinion leads to other issues employers deal with that appear as skill shortages. Those being the need for more developed supervisors and managers and often times failed attempts to fill or refill positions through the use of temporary staff (involving high turnover) or mass application campaigns which absorb inordinate amounts of time and energy for minimal success. It is my further opinion, and observation, that a lack of participation in WorkKeys profiling (employers) and assessment (displaced workers, students, etc.) has root cause impacts.

In my experience in education and training, particularly when dealing with adults and incumbent workers, there is a need to create more value surrounding the attainment of education and individual development. By creating value you create currency for these needed skills and individuals become motivated to participate, aspire and even surpass development goals which results in gains for the individual, the employer and the community.

2357 CHESTER BOULEVARD
RICHMOND, INDIANA 47374-1298

765-966-2656
FAX 765-962-8741

Ivy Tech is an accredited, equal opportunity, affirmative action community college.

Stephanie Kreseen
December 22, 2005
Page 2

It is the intention of Ivy Tech to continue to be involved in this important process examining root causes and prescribing solutions for skills shortages in our region to the benefit of our residents and our communities. Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kim Thurlow".

Kim Thurlow
Executive Director, Workforce and Economic Development (WED)
Ivy Tech Community College – Richmond
765.966.8737
kthurlow@ivytech.edu

*Limestone Products, Inc
1665 S 200 W
P.O. Box 618
Portland, Indiana, 47371
Phone: (260) 726-4971*

December 20, 2005

*Stephanie Kreseen
P.O. Box 1081
Muncie, IN 47308-1081*

As President of Limestone Products, Inc in Portland. I have been involved with the Strategic Skills in Eastern Indiana. Limestone Products, a leader in Construction and Transportation feels this Initiative is especially important to us. We believe that proper merit training could greatly benefit Indiana Employment Opportunities. My initial involvement in this effort was at a workforce investment board meeting at Ivy Tech in Muncie. I expressed my opinion by stating, " Only having organize labor shops is not adequate training to this area we need merit shops as well. We live in a state where 67% of employment is construction workers non union instead of organized labors." It is the intention of Limestone Products, Inc to provide continued support to this initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

*Thank you,
Bill Davis*

Bill Davis



RUSH COUNTY SCHOOLS

Dr. Edwin A. Lyskowski, Superintendent

Dennis G. Chambers, Administrative Assistant

12-21-2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Since I first learned of the Strategic Skills Initiative, I have been a part of the Executive Team for the Region 6 Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region. I joined the team to represent the educational sector to see how education could partner to enhance the workforce of Eastern Indiana.

I have been very impressed by the professional qualities of all the members of the Executive Team and particularly, the core agent, Barbara Street. This team is committed to enhancing the workforce in the identified strategic skills shortages, and I am proud to be a part of this effort. Our effort is fortunate to be enhanced by the expertise of Dr. Pat Barkey of Ball State University.

I have already participated in the community forum, small group interview, and all executive team meetings. I plan to continue to serve in this capacity as long as my employer supports my efforts and the need continues with the SSI. I am most encouraged by the diversion from the county vs. county philosophy to a team approach of development over the entire region. I hope my experience and background from the educational sector is a valuable resource to develop and implement strategies to overcome skill shortages in the identified high skilled workforce to, thereby, enhance economic development in Eastern Indiana.

Sincerely,

Dennis G. Chambers
Assistant Superintendent – Rush County Schools



RUSH COUNTY SCHOOLS

Dr. Edwin A. Lyskowski, Superintendent

Dennis G. Chambers, Administrative Assistant

12-21-2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to express and demonstrate my support for the Strategic Skills Initiative for the Region 6 Eastern Indiana Economic Growth Region. As Superintendent of Rush County Schools, I have already assisted in the effort in several ways. First, I have allowed our Assistant Superintendent to participate on the Executive Team, which has often taken him away from school duties. Second, I was an active participant in a countywide community forum to help explore the skill shortage areas in our region. Third, I have participated in a small group interview for the current phase to help explore root causes for the shortages found from phase one.

I plan to continue to support the Strategic Skills Initiative as needed to help explore strategies to overcome the root causes discovered from this phase. I will continue to support the involvement of other school personnel to help the economic growth in our region.

Sincerely,

Dr. Edwin A. Lyskowski
Superintendent – Rush County Schools

Career & Technical
Education

Phone (765) 747-5250
Fax (765) 747-5455



Adult & Community
Education

Phone (765) 747-5257
Fax (765) 751-0500

December 20, 2005

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

RE: EASTERN INDIANA STRATEGIC SKILLS INITIATIVE

I am writing from multiple perspectives as a member of the East Central Workforce Investment Board, One Stop Operator (OSO) Consortium member, Adult Education provider in three counties (Blackford, Delaware, and Jay), and Vocational Director for three counties (Blackford, Delaware, and Randolph). As the Director of Vocational and Adult Education for Muncie Community Schools, I have been involved in the Strategic Skills initiative by attending employer forums in Blackford and Delaware counties. In addition, I have participated in the one-on-one interviews, once as an OSO member and also in the Delaware County educators interview session held at the Muncie Area Career Center.

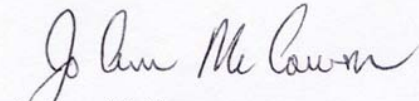
During the OSO interview session, the partners stated that the causes for these shortages included a lack of aggressive leadership from economic development personnel in Delaware County, failure of businesses to take full advantage of the WorkKeys system, lack of preparation and understanding of workplace practices by new workers, and low literacy skills of incumbent workers who are resistant to change. While there is an adequate number of training providers for local employers to select from, there is a problem with employers providing time for literacy or specific skills training during the work day. Therefore, incumbent workers do not take advantage of training opportunities outside of the workday as they do not see any incentive for participating.

From my perspective as the Vocational Director for Muncie Community Schools, I expressed the following as skill shortages during the education interview session with SSI staff. The current focus from a state and local level is to prepare students for college by having all students earn either a Core 40 or Academic Honors Diploma. This tight focus does not allow students time in their high school schedules to fully participate in career and technical education opportunities. In addition, there is a negative image of advanced manufacturing careers by parents and community members which prevents students from entering machine, welding, or other technical programs. Another area of concern discussed during the interview session was that students do not receive workplace readiness training teaching them communication skills, work ethics, and how to work as a member of a team. I also voiced a concern that students do not receive information about career options. In my opinion, students may leave high school ready academically to enter

college, but they have no direction regarding what career/major they should select. This results in lost time and money for students when they enter college. The current focus on academics in Indiana does not allow students time to job shadow, participate in internships, and explore career options through career and technical education programs.

As an educator and partner of the WorkOne system, the Muncie Community Schools Vocational and Adult Education programs will continue to participate in the Strategic Skills Initiative project in East Central Indiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jo Ann McCowan".

Jo Ann McCowan
Director Vocational Education & Extended Services
Muncie Community Schools



Mid-West Metal Products Company Inc.

Symbol of Quality in Wire Formed Products

P.O. Box 1031
Muncie, IN 47308
800 428-8560

Voice
765 289-3355
Fax
765 289-6524

12/21/05

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Human Resource Manager at Mid-West Metal Products in Muncie, I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. I participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. The company will provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback.

Sincerely,

Kevin P. Smith

80
Years
Since 1921



JAY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORP.

BOB QUADROZZI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

118 SOUTH MERIDIAN ST., SUITE B
PORTLAND, IN 47371-2105
www.jaycountydev.com

(260) 726-9311
FAX (260) 726-4477
E-mail:jcdc@omnicityusa.com

December 19, 2005

Stephanie Kreseen
P O Box 1081
Muncie, IN 47308-1081

RE: Strategic Skills Initiative

Dear Ms. Kreseen:

As the Executive Director of the Jay County Development Corporation I have been quite involved in the SSI in Eastern Indiana.

Prior to this I have been associated, mostly as a board member, with four different employment & training entities dating back to CETA, JTPA and now WIA in three different states.

In my mind, one of the major "root causes for our current skill shortages is very simple and two-fold."

- 1) Stop paying people not to work!
- 2) Put back the old "shop classes" in our schools.

Sounds simple but it worked to produce the skilled people we have in today's work force!!

I look forward to seeing these two causes being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana as well as the rest of the State.

Sincerely,

Bob Quadrozzi
Executive Director

BQ/jms



1300 Spartan Drive • Connersville, Indiana 47331
Phone 765 825 0521 Fax 765 827 0836

Milt Eley, Vocational Director

Mark McCoskey, Asst. Vocational Director

December 19, 2005

Serving

Centerville High School



East Central Indiana Workforce Investment Board
Attention: Stephanie Goodman
201 E. Charles Street, Suite 140
Muncie, IN 47331

To Whom It May Concern,

Connersville High School



As Vocational Director of Region 9, Area 34, and Whitewater Technical Career Center I have been involved with S.S.I. from the first as a Consortium Member. I attended the Connersville Forum and have been interviewed through Eastern Indiana Development Group.

My involvement is to assist in identifying job market needs and possibly provide training in areas identified in the future.

Franklin County High School



During my involvement I have expressed the need for Health Careers, Precision Machining and Soft Skills. As a Career Center we offer these, however, the need is not understood by parents and adults. The opportunity for such training being available at Whitewater Technical Career Center is not recognized.

Lincoln High School



It is my intension to provide input and continued support to this initiative by being available to meet with or initiate the proper training programs for these "high demand" identified careers.

Rushville High School



Sincerely,

Milt Eley

Union County High School



Preparing today's students for tomorrow's careers.



December 27, 2005

Dear Sir or Madame,

Ivy Tech Community College of East Central Indiana has been an active participant in all phases of the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. Ivy Tech is the primary training and educational post-secondary institution for health care and public service workers. The College also trains a significant number of computer, business and manufacturing workers through credit and non-credit courses. Ivy Tech is poised to contribute to the education and training in the life sciences and the expansion of health care programs.

The Strategic Skills Initiative of Eastern Indiana is a key element for creating a positive impact on the future of business, industry and the overall economic growth of this region. Ivy Tech Community College stands ready to support this initiative and will continue to participate at all levels of the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Gail Chesterfield'.

Gail Chesterfield
Acting Chancellor
Ivy Tech Community College-East Central

4301 SOUTH COWAN ROAD
MUNCIE, INDIANA 47302
765-289-2291
FAX 765-289-2292

Ivy Tech is an accredited, equal opportunity, affirmative action community college.



P.O. Box 136
Hagerstown, IN 47346
Phone: 765-489-5629
Fax: 765-489-3100
E-mail dburns@omnicityusa.com

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

December 18, 2005

Stephanie Kreseen
P.O. Box 1081
Muncie, IN 47308-1081

RE: SSI Support

As the president of Burns Corporation in Hagerstown and as the Chairman of the Southeastern Indiana Workforce Investment Board, I have been involved with and excited about the Strategic Skills Initiative in Indiana.

I feel this Initiative is especially important to us due to a shortage of potential employees who possess adequate work ethics to become the highly skilled construction workforce that we will soon need in eastern Indiana.

My continuing involvement in this effort included the Wayne County Community Forum. I also participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI staff. During the interview, I expressed my opinion that the causes for these shortages include a communication gap between educators and employers, lack of understanding and preparation in accepted workplace practices, ethics, and a negative view of the construction industry.

I also express my concern that a lack of post-secondary and continuing education in the workforce as well as low enrollment in high school level vocational schools due to inadequate funding, state policy, and State-DOE emphasis on academic honors diplomas, will continue to impair our efforts to create a high quality construction workforce.

It is the intention of Burns Corporation to provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate.

We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dennis A. Burns".

Sincerely,
BURNS CORPORATION

Dennis A. Burns, President



East Central Opportunities, Inc.

Administrative Office

201 E. Charles Street

P.O. Box 1081

Muncie, IN 47308-1081

Phone: (765) 741-5863 Fax: (765) 741-5869

E-mail: eco@ecoinc.org <http://www.ecoinc.org>

**Employment & Training
Service Sites:**

Strategic Skills Initiative Region 6

RE: Root Causes Report

Blackford County

1301 North High Street, Suite B
Hartford City, IN 47348
Phone: (765) 348-4928
Fax: (765) 348-9930
E-mail: blackford@ecoinc.org

Delaware County

201 E. Charles Street, Suite 140
Muncie, IN 47308
Phone: (765) 289-1861
Fax: (765) 741-5853
E-mail: delaware@ecoinc.org

Henry County

1416 Broad Street, Suite 125
New Castle, IN 47362
Phone: (765) 529-3010
Fax: (765) 521-7779
E-mail: henry@ecoinc.org

Jay County

112 North Ship Street
Portland, IN 47371
Phone: (260) 726-8316
Fax: (260) 726-8431
E-mail: jay@ecoinc.org

Randolph County

325 South Oak Street, Suite 301
Winchester, IN 47394
Phone: (765) 584-5627
Fax: (765) 584-2536
E-mail: randolph@ecoinc.org

To Whom It May Concern: As CEO of East Central Opportunities, Inc. a WorkOne Partner and Workforce Investment Act Provider in East Central Indiana I have been involved, along with many of my staff, with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. Staff have been involved in WorkOne partner sessions in Blackford, Henry, Delaware, Jay and Randolph counties. I was involved in the One Stop Operator Consortium session with SSI staff. Many of the observations by our organization revolve around contact with job seekers and feedback through the system by employers. Much of the gap between skills demanded by employers and available from the job seeker population result from a lack of understanding and preparation in accepted workplace practices and workplace ethics. This can be expanded to address the disconnect between high school curriculum and business expectations; lack of understanding of the local opportunities for employment; a clear path of a career/education ladder to meet the occupational requirements of the individual occupational choice; and, the unrealistic value of the skills attained for the occupation. Other observations relate to the lack of entrepreneurial spirit. The drive to create opportunities for employment seems to be lacking and if individuals develop a skill that is in a high paying occupation they go where there are already employment opportunities rather than trying to create local demand. In Delaware county and to a lesser extent in the surrounding counties there seems to be an issue of generational poverty and dependence on entitlement programs that local resources cannot compensate for. East Central Opportunities, Inc. will continue to provide employment and training services and will support this initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Sincerely,

Patrick L. Miller

"A WorkOne Partner"



December 29, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Human Resource Manager at Jarden Home Brands' Closure Plant, I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. Jarden Home Brands feels this Initiative is especially important to us due to a shortage in skilled tradespersons in the area. Our initial involvement in this effort was at the Delaware Community Forum, and we also participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. During the interview, we expressed our opinion that the causes for these shortages include a disconnect between high school curriculum and business needs, Lack of post-secondary and continuing education in the workforce and a negative view of the manufacturing industry.

It is the intention of Jarden Home Brands to provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Please contact me at 765-281-5219 if any further information is required or if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Howard E. Scheetz, SPHR
Manager, Human Resources

UNITED BROTHERHOOD OF CARPENTERS AND JOINERS OF AMERICA

INDIANA/KENTUCKY REGIONAL COUNCIL OF CARPENTERS

DAVID C. THARP
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY-TREASURER
BUSINESS MANAGER



2635 MADISON AVENUE
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46225-2110
PHONE: (317) 783-1391
FAX: (317) 781-2549

To Whom It May Concern:

As Business Manager of the Indiana/Kentucky Regional Council of Carpenters Local 1016 in Muncie, Indiana, I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana since its creation. The Carpenters of Local 1016, a four hundred member construction union, feel this initiative is especially important to us due to an expected shortage of construction workers in the very near future.

As a member of the SSI Executive Team, I hope to work to eliminate some of the barriers which have hindered people from entering the construction trades. Those being a total disconnect between high school curriculum and the needs of the construction industry. The perception of construction being a dead end occupation, but in reality, just the opposite is true. The need for continuing education or life long learning once you enter the trade and the need for all workers to be educated in the real world application of basic soft skills, communication with others, accepting common work place practices and good work place ethics.

It is my intention as a member of the SSI Executive Team to provide my full and continued support for this initiative by providing leadership and feedback as it is appropriate. I look forward to being a part of this solution not only in Eastern Indiana but also the state of Indiana.

Joseph A. Evans

Joseph A. Evans
Business Manager Indiana/Kentucky Regional Council of Carpenters Local #1016
4201 E. Centennial Avenue
Muncie, IN 47303
Phone: 765-288-7568
Fax: 765-288-2556



CITY OF RICHMOND

50 NORTH FIFTH STREET - RICHMOND, IN 47374
PHONE (765) 983-7207 - FAX (765) 983-7212
Email - mayor@ci.richmond.in.us

SALLY L. HUTTON
Mayor

December 27, 2005

As a Mayor of the City of Richmond, I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. My involvement in this effort was in the Wayne County Community Forum and I also participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. During the interview, we expressed our opinion that the causes for these shortages include a communication gap between educators and employers, and a negative view of the manufacturing industry. It is my intention as Mayor of the City of Richmond, to provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. I look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Hutton".

Sally Hutton
Mayor



December 21, 2005

Stephanie Kreseen

Dear Ms. Kreseen:

Lisa Barnett and I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. Tyson Mexican Original, a bakery manufacturing industry, feels that this initiative is especially important to us due to a shortage in Computer Controlled Programmers and Operators and Computer Controlled Machine Tool Operators.

Our initial involvement in this effort was at the Jay County Forum, and we also participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. During the interview, we expressed our opinion that the causes of these shortages include training and work ethics.

It is the intention of Tyson Mexican Original to provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being a part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa Price".

Lisa Price
HR Supervisor



BALL BROTHERS FOUNDATION

222 SOUTH MULBERRY STREET, P.O. BOX 1408, MUNCIE, INDIANA 47308 765/741 5530

Strategic Skills Initiative Letter of Support

The Foundation is particularly interested in the Eastern Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative because of the Foundation's active involvement with economic development across a seven county region.

Over the Foundation's history, dating from 1926, the Foundation has consistently provided funds to encourage the promotion and facilitation of the free enterprise system, to underwrite educational programs at area universities and colleges, and to promote the development of contemporary work skills ability in area high schools.

Currently, the Foundation is providing funds across the region to facilitate economic development and workforce training opportunities. Most of these activities are being carried out by Energize - ECI headed by Roy Budd and sponsored, in large part by Foundation financial resources.

The Foundation was pleased to be interviewed and was one part of the process of broad community input from across the region. The Foundation's view is that the region is shifting from manufacturing jobs to fabrication jobs; reflecting the needs of national corporation's who now "fabricate" autos, machines and other units of enterprise.

The Foundation believes that Indiana's central location, the reframing of the auto industry from the Big Three to the "new five" is driving much of Indiana's industrial base. It is our hope that Indiana's leaders will find creative ways to encourage youth and adults to be either trained and/or retrained to secure jobs that are available across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Study.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Bakken
Executive Vice President/COO

Building community in Indiana since 1926



Quality care by those who care



December 30, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

As CEO at Jay County Hospital in Portland, Indiana, I have been involved with the Strategic Skills Initiative in Eastern Indiana. Jay County Hospital feels this Initiative is especially important to us due to a shortage of licensed health care workers in the area. Our initial involvement in this effort was at the Hospital here, and we also participated in a one-on-one interview with the SSI team. During the interview, we expressed our opinion that the causes for these shortages include a communication gap between educators and employers, and a negative view of rural Indiana vs. the urban area of the State. It is the intention of Jay County Hospital to provide continued support to this Initiative by providing feedback and participating, either directly or indirectly as appropriate. We look forward to being part of the solution in Eastern Indiana.

Sincerely,

R. Joe Johnston
Chief Executive Officer
Jay County Hospital
500 West Votaw
Portland, IN 47371
Phone: (260) 7226-1816
Fax: (260) 726-1975
E-mail: jjohnston@jaycountyhospital.com

Cc: file/aef



December 19, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

I am the Senior Vice President of Human Resources for Cardinal Health System, Inc. We are the largest healthcare provider in East Central Indiana, as well as being the largest employer in the region. I have a unique interest in the SSI Initiative from both the employer's perspective and as the Chairman of the East Central Indiana Workforce Investment Board. Let me focus my comments on my role as a major employer.

One of the biggest challenges in my business is the employment of a skilled workforce. There are large number of vacancies in many of the professional positions such as Registered Nurses, Therapists, Radiologic Technologists, and Laboratory Technicians. Plus we employ a large contingent of service and support workers requiring a wide spectrum of knowledge and skills. This integrated team of individuals is essential in providing quality health services. For a number of years Cardinal Health System has worked with the WorkOne system to increase the healthcare workforce pool, but the SSI initiative advances this partnership with health careers being one of the key focus areas.

There is a capacity issue in healthcare. Quite simply, there are more jobs than there are people to fill them. This is exactly where SSI should be focused. Addressing these workforce needs requires a multi-layered approach. We must address both new and incumbent worker skill shortages, we need to prepare career pathways for students so they understand the opportunities and what they must do to prepare themselves for the labor market, and we have to help educators understand our business needs so they can better counsel and prepare students. Cardinal Health System sees the SSI as an avenue to accomplish these goals. We plan to be actively support this initiative by both providing feedback and by participating wherever appropriate.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Allen
Sr. VP Human Resources